

Summary

1. Some aspects of variation in the forms of Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone* inhabiting islands in the western Indian Ocean are discussed. As with some species of other families, *T. mutata* is longer billed in the Comoros than Madagascar. This applies particularly to Anjouan, and is perhaps due to a lack of competitors, such as are more apparent on Grand Comoro. There is also a reduction in sexual dimorphism in colour and tail-length, except on Mayotte, the nearest of the Comoros to Madagascar. *T. bourbonnensis*, of the Mascarenes, is not particularly long-billed, but shows less sexual dimorphism than any form of *mutata*. Bill-length is proportionately no greater in *T. corvina* of the remote Seychelles than in some Comoro forms of *mutata*, and contrary to expectation sexual dimorphism is well marked. In all of these forms, not taking account of an extremely small sample of *T. b. bourbonnensis*, the bill/wing ratio is higher in the female than the male, the difference being greatest in *corvina* and least in *mutata* on Madagascar. The possible significance of this is not understood. Feathered nestlings of *T. bourbonnensis desolata* and *corvina* are described.

2. The differences between the Cuckoo Shrikes *Coracina typica* of Mauritius and *C. newtoni* of Réunion are described. Both are strongly sexually dimorphic in colour, and differences between the females of the two species are well marked. They may be of Asiatic origin, as is perhaps also *C. cinerea* of Madagascar and the Comoros, though *cinerea* does not appear particularly closely related to the Mascarene species. *C. typica* is the longest billed of the three species, while *newtoni* is little longer billed than *cinerea* in Madagascar and shorter billed than this species in the Comoros.

References:

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Status of *Lorius amabilis* Stresemann

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Received 8th March, 1971

Two species of *Lorius* have been recorded from New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago, New Guinea. *Lorius hypoinochrous* G. R. Gray is distributed from south-eastern New Guinea to the eastern Papuan Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago. The second species, *Lorius amabilis* Stresemann, is known only from the type, a female collected at Nakanai by P. Otto Meyer in August 1931. Peters (1937) lists this species without any comment, simply giving its range as New Britain.

In the course of working on New Guinea parrots I examined the type of *L. amabilis*. It was almost certainly a captive bird, because the primaries have been removed, a common practice among New Guinea people to prevent

flight and to obtain feathers for head adornments. Direct comparison of the type with specimens of *L. hypoinochrous* confirmed the differences given by Stresemann (1931)—*amabilis* lacks a black cap, has only traces of the dark bands across the hindneck and mantle, has duller, more greenish lower underparts, and has yellowish-brown instead of dark grey legs and claws. However, the two birds are similar in general appearances; *amabilis* even has the white cere so characteristic of *hypoinochrous* and, although the new primaries are only emerging, there seems to be no difference in the underwing pattern. There are no differences in tail, bill and tarsus measurements.

	Tail	Exp. cul.	Tars.
<i>L. amabilis</i> (type only)	90 mm	25 mm	23 mm
<i>L. hypoinochrous</i> (8♀♀)	84–95(88.9)mm	23–27(25.3)mm	22–25(23.0)mm

This overall similarity suggests to me that *amabilis* may not be a valid species. If this is so there are two alternatives that must be considered; it could be the juvenile or an aberrant specimen of *hypoinochrous*.

We know from breeding in captivity that the young of two other black-capped species, *lory* and *domicellus*, have black caps when they leave the nest (Burgess 1921, Spence 1955), so it is unlikely that even very young *hypoinochrous* lack the black cap. Furthermore, the orange-red colouration of the bill, as given on the label of the *amabilis* type, agrees with the adult bill colouration common to the genus; juveniles have brownish bills. For these reasons I reject the possibility of *amabilis* being the juvenile of *hypoinochrous*.

In my opinion interruption to a possibly simple genetic factor controlling black pigmentation could bring about all the distinguishing features of *amabilis*. In fact, examination of the type specimen so strongly suggests this that I prefer to dismiss *amabilis* as a species until further specimens are obtained. Of course, I am not prepared to say that specimens will not be collected; neighbouring New Ireland has two species of *Lorius*, though the second, *L. albidinuchus* (Rothschild & Hartert), is very different from *hypoinochrous*.

I should also point out that in the genus there are two other species which do not have black caps. *L. garrulus* (Linné) has supporting distinguishing features, namely green thighs and a diagnostic underwing pattern; it is widespread through the Moluccas. *L. tibialis* Sclater is known only from the unique type, a female purchased in the Calcutta market about 1867 and presented to the London Zoo; the original description indicates an overall similarity to *L. domicellus* (see Sclater 1871).

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Dr. G. Mauersberger of the Zoologisches Museum, Berlin, for the loan of the type of *Lorius amabilis*.

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